1011-15-175 **Zhongshan Li*** (zli@gsu.edu), Department of Mathematics & Statistics, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 30303-3083, and **Marina Arav**, **Yubin Gao**, **Frank Hall** and **Selcuk Koyuncu**. *Sign patterns that almost require a unique rank.*

A *sign pattern matrix* is a matrix whose entries are from the set $\{+, -, 0\}$. The *minimum rank* (respectively, the *maximum rank*) of a sign pattern matrix A is the minimum (respectively, maximum) of the ranks of the real matrices whose entries have signs equal to the corresponding entries of A. We say that a sign pattern matrix A *almost requires a unique rank* if its maximum rank and minimum rank differ by one. We investigate the structure of sign patterns that almost require a unique rank. In particular, it is shown that for such a sign pattern, the minimum rank can be achieved by an integer matrix. (Received August 24, 2005)